

Hawkins (Hawkings), John ^[1]

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d. 12 Dec. 1717

John Hawkins (Hawkings), Council member, Assembly member, and justice of the General Court and of the Pasquotank Precinct Court, emigrated from England to North Carolina before November 1682. He probably came from County Kent, where he was arrested and fined for attending a Quaker meeting in 1670. Settling in [Pasquotank Precinct](#) ^[2], Hawkins joined the Pasquotank Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends; he became an elder of the meeting and served on various committees. His devotion and services to his chosen faith are mentioned in a number of [Quaker](#) ^[3]writings.

In following Hawkins's career, one must take care to distinguish between records pertaining to him and those concerning other individuals with the same name, for at least four other colonists were named John Hawkins. One, whose will was proved in 1688, may have been the John Hawkins mentioned in court records as jury foreman in September 1670 and as juror in county court in the early 1680s, although some of those references may pertain to the subject of this sketch. Another John Hawkins, born in February 1671/72 and a resident of Perquimans Precinct, was the son of [Francis Godfrey](#) ^[4]'s daughter, Frances, and her husband, Thomas Hawkins, both of whom died during the infancy of their son, who eventually became the ward of his uncle, John Godfrey. A third John Hawkins, born about 1682 and a resident of Chowan Precinct, was the son of [James Blount](#) ^[5]'s daughter, Elizabeth, and her first husband, Thomas Hawkins, who died during his son's childhood. The boy was first made the ward of his paternal grandmother, Alice Hawkins Wade, but subsequently was the ward of his stepfather, Michael Lynch. A fourth John Hawkins, who apparently lived in Chowan, probably was an uncle of the younger John Hawkins of Chowan, but his identity is not certain.

The subject of this sketch seems to have been the only John Hawkins who lived in Pasquotank and was a Quaker. No doubt he is the one whose name appears as witness on the wills of several Quakers of that vicinity, including Dorothy Harvey, widow of [John Harvey](#) ^[6], who made her will in November 1682. He probably was the John Hawkins who, in 1690, was appointed attorney by Elizabeth Banks of London to act with Francis Tomes in prosecuting certain claims against Governor [Seth Sothel](#) ^[7]. Records relating to the estate of Thomas Hunt of Pasquotank indicate that the John Hawkins named as Hunt's administrator in 1696 was the one of present interest.

At an unknown date Hawkins became justice of the Pasquotank Precinct Court, a position he held in July 1694 and in January 1697/98. The exact period of his tenure has not been established because of the sparseness of surviving records of that court. On 6 Nov. 1697 Hawkins was commissioned justice of the General Court. He took his seat the following March and retained it through July 1703.

In the early 1700s Hawkins was elected to the lower house of the Assembly and served at least one session, probably in 1702 or 1703. He was reelected but was barred from taking his seat because of a policy, instituted in 1704, requiring all members to swear to, not merely affirm, the oath of allegiance and other oaths of office. The discontinuance of an earlier policy permitting Quakers to affirm instead of swearing served to disqualify Hawkins and the other burgesses elected from Pasquotank, all of whom were Quakers and prohibited by their religion from swearing. A special election was called to replace the Pasquotank burgesses.

Widespread dissatisfaction with the new policy led to changes favorable to Quakers, and by November 1707 Hawkins held a seat on the Council and was ex officio member of the upper house of the Assembly. He remained in those positions through November 1709, soon after which he appears to have left public life.

In private life Hawkins was a merchant, planter, and enslaver. He owned at least 600 acres of land in Pasquotank and at his death was part owner of a vessel engaged in the coast-wise trade. He also left a substantial estate in possessions of other types. This other property included enslaved people. He and his wife, Sarah, had two sons, John and Thomas, who were living in 1688, but they apparently died before their parents. There is no mention of children or grandchildren in the will of either parent.

According to Quaker records, Hawkins was "upwards of three score years" at the time of his death. Sarah was also more than sixty when she died on 28 Oct. 1722. In their wills, which complemented each other, John and Sarah left most of their estate to Hawkins's cousin, Thomas Merreday, and to the children of Hawkins's sister, Elizabeth, who had remained in England. They bequeathed the remainder of their estate to various friends.

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